

Opportunities for Improving Ridership



A Report by the FTA Ridership Team

September 2005

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Executive Summary

As part of its FY 2005 Strategic Business Plan, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is working with its partners in the transit industry to increase public transportation ridership by at least 1% nationwide over the previous year. In order to support this critical and challenging goal, the FTA Office of Budget and Policy elected to conduct pilot ridership site visits at two transit agencies that experienced a decrease in ridership during the last two years. The site visits were intended to identify opportunities where improvements in transit ridership could be made and to provide technical assistance to the two transit agencies. The first site visit was conducted at CT Transit – Hartford from July 25-28, 2005.

CTRAN – Clark County agreed to participate as the second pilot transit agency in this national effort. From August 15 -18, 2005, the second FTA Ridership Team visited Vancouver, Washington to conduct a comprehensive review of the CTRAN bus system to identify opportunities that may exist for improving ridership. The team was composed of FTA headquarters and regional staff, as well as experts from transit agencies located in Oklahoma, Minnesota, and Utah.

The Ridership Team members met with CTRAN employees with expertise in each focus area, reviewed operational data, actively observed bus operations at peak and off-peak travel times, and spoke with operators and members of the riding public. Each team member reviewed one of five functional areas in which ridership initiatives could be undertaken: service coverage and routes, fare structures, operations and service quality, marketing, and partnerships.

CTRAN has agreed to review recommendations contained in this report and select those they can implement. For those selected, CTRAN will develop detailed implementation plans and measurement protocols to track the recommendation's impact on ridership over time. Over a period of six months to one year, FTA will continue to monitor the impacts on ridership and advise CTRAN as needed.

Recommendations were developed in each functional area and are summarized below.

Service Coverage and Routes

The team made recommendations concerning driver announcements, express service to Portland, the existing Seventh Street Transit Center and its proposed replacement, fare box data analysis, routes, and schedules.

Fare Structure

The team made recommendations concerning use of particular passes and their costs, simplifying upgrade fare costs, shuttle services, sales outlets, transfers, and coordination with TriMet.

Operations and Maintenance

The team made recommendations concerning employee absenteeism and workers compensation, paratransit eligibility, operator customer service training, amenities, and maintenance procedures.

Marketing

The team made recommendations concerning ways to attract new residents to the area, travel training for seniors, customer service, coordination of trip planning with TriMet, and web-site improvements.

Partnerships

The team made recommendations concerning university passes, employer passes, vanpooling, and social service coordination.

The report that follows provides the team's observations and a complete discussion of all recommendations.

CTRAN



Profile

CTRAN is the primary provider of public transportation in Clark County, Washington, the principle city of which is Vancouver. In addition to 18 local routes in Clark County, CTRAN operates 8 commuter or express routes to Portland, Oregon. It also operates demand response service for citizens in its coverage area.

CTRAN has been in operation for almost 25 years and in 1999, experienced a 40% reduction in funding due to the passage of County Initiative 695. The legislation repealed the local motor vehicle excise tax which accounted for the decline in CTRAN's funding. As a result, CTRAN has been forced to allocate capital funding to support its daily maintenance and operations, and in 2000, to cut its service area by 28%, from 237 square miles to 171 square miles. However, the need to reconcile operations with the level of funding resulted in a May 2005, fare increase, an organizational restructuring, and a reduction in CTRAN's service boundary.

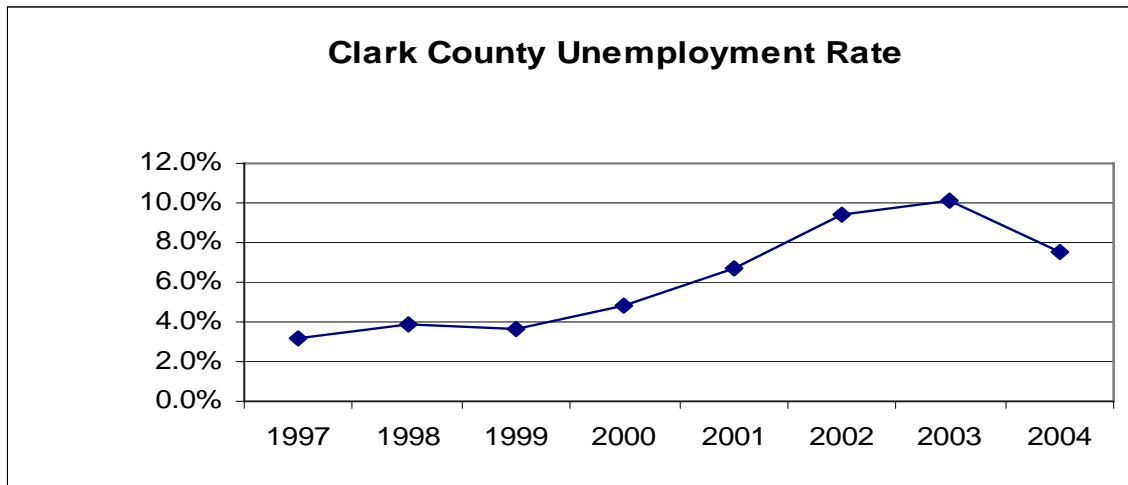
On September 20, 2005, Clark County will be given the opportunity to approve a ballot measure that would restore funding to support CTRAN's bus service. This measure would increase the sales tax by 0.2%. If the measure is not approved, CTRAN will be forced to implement a 40% service reduction in order to balance its budget.

Data Analysis

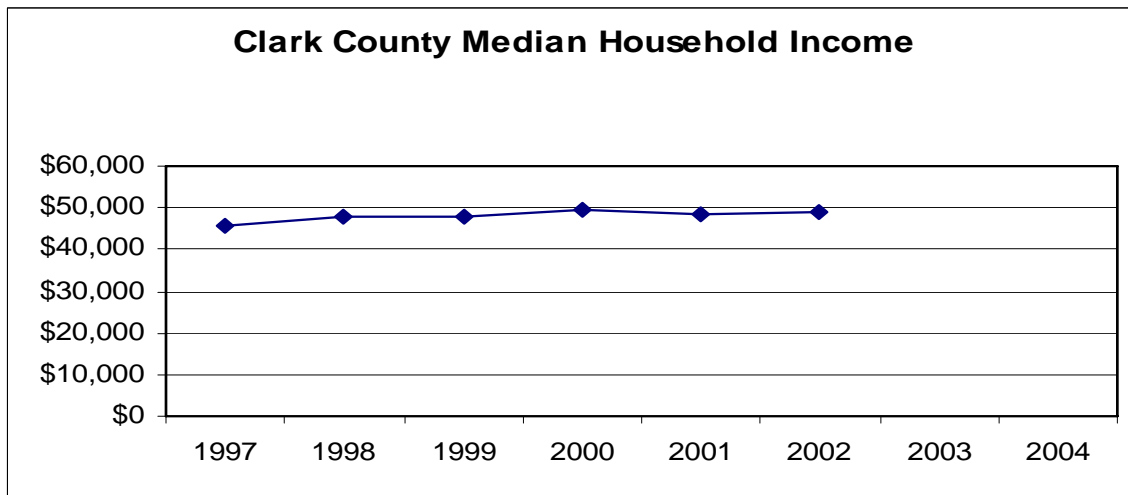
Trends and Highlights in Internal Data – CTRAN

The 2000 service cuts impacted almost every one of CTRAN's internal measures. Based upon National Transit Database (NTD) information for the years 1997 to 2004, CTRAN's service area population has been slowly increasing, at less than 1% per year. This trend is in contrast to Clark County's overall population gain of 35% between 1990 and 2000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Trends and Highlights in External Data



CTTRAN's service area's unemployment rate rose steadily from 1997 to 2003, which accounted for some of the loss in ridership. At the same time, total employment in Clark County increased due to overall population expansion.



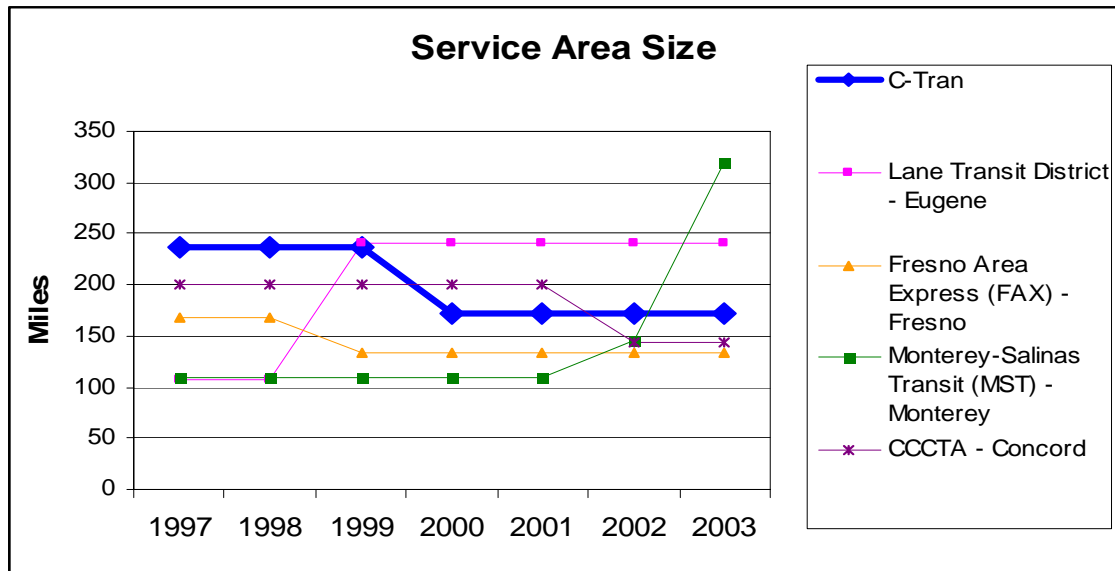
According to U.S. Census information, the median annual household income in Clark County increased 6.9% between 1997 and 2002 to \$48,376; however, approximately 9.1% of persons and 6.9% of families in Clark County were below the poverty level. Also, almost 18% of the population in Clark County between the ages of 21 and 64 is disabled

Peer Analysis

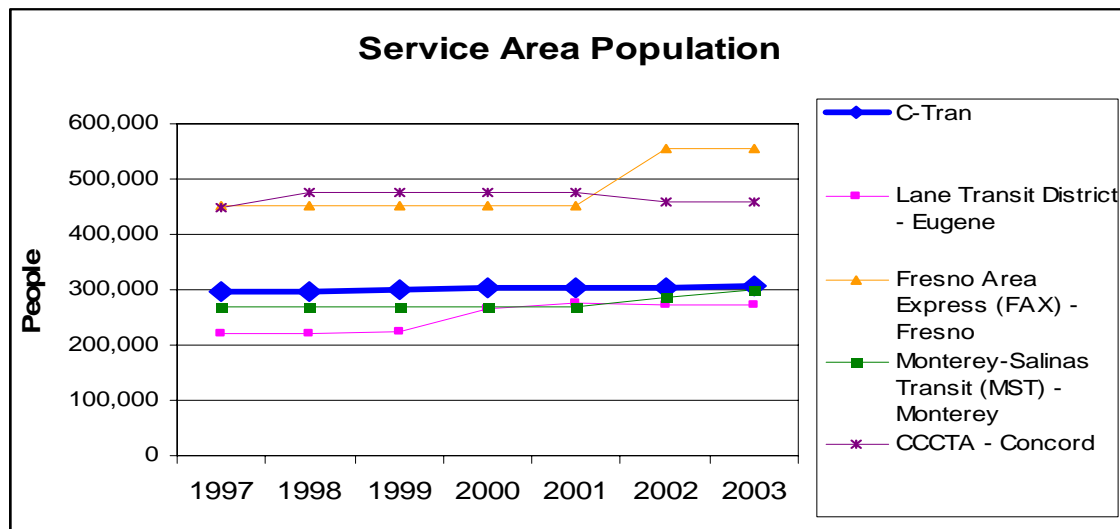
Information for CTRAN and several of its peer agencies was collected using the NTD and other sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, in an effort to identify recent trends

in service area characteristics, operations, finance, and performance measures. Data points were collected, where available, for the years 1997 through 2004 to determine how CTRAN compared with similar transit agencies.

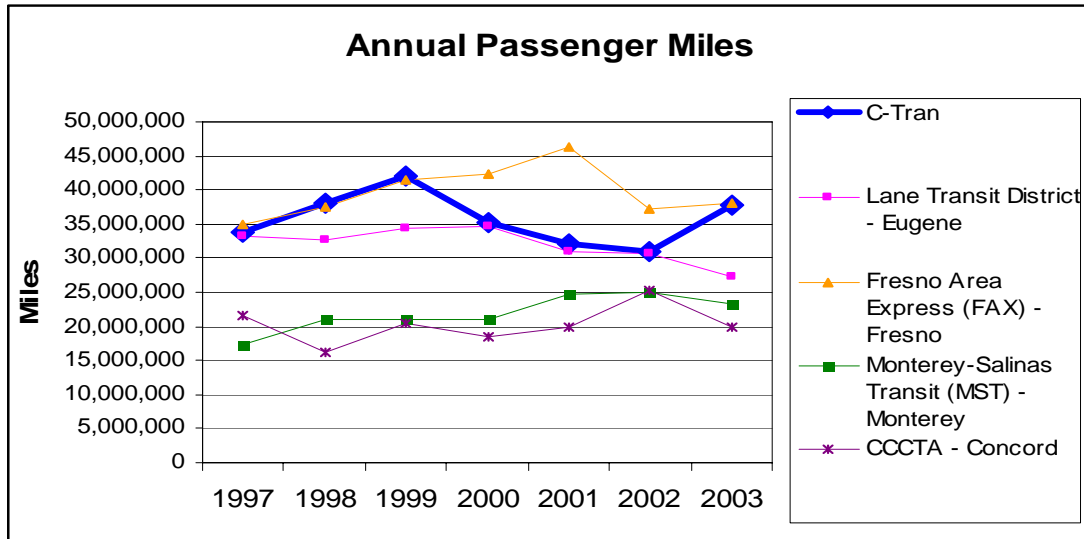
Similar transit markets to CTRAN in this analysis are: Central Contra Costa Transit Authority (CCCTA) in Concord, CA; Lane Transit District in Eugene, OR; Fresno Area Express in Fresno, CA; and Monterey-Salinas Transit in Monterey, CA. A brief analysis of these markets using NTD reports from 1997-2003 provide the following key observations on trends:



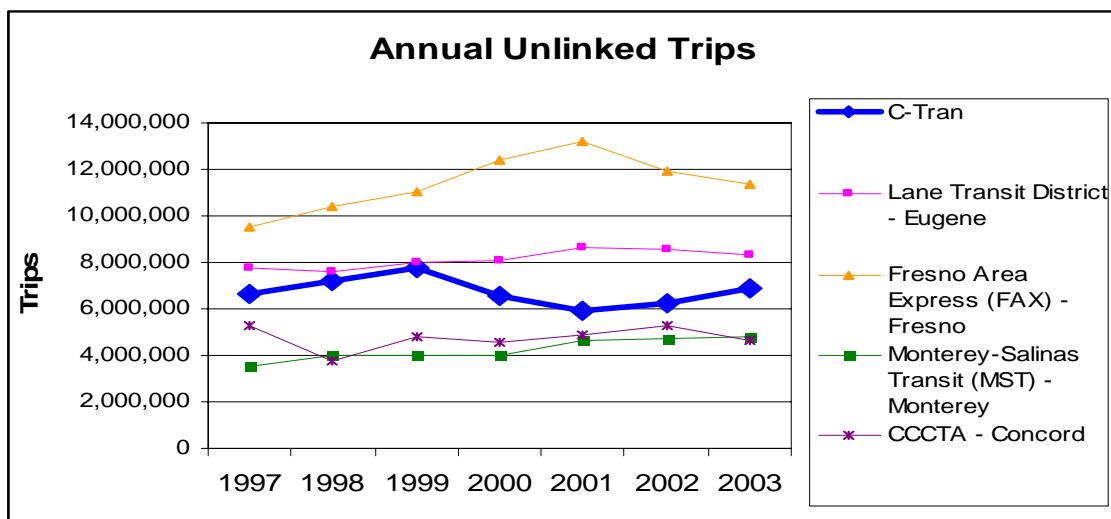
With the 2000 service area cuts, CTRAN is below average in terms of service area size and population. However, CTRAN's ridership is average to well above average in comparison to the peer group, and has been improving since 2001/2002.



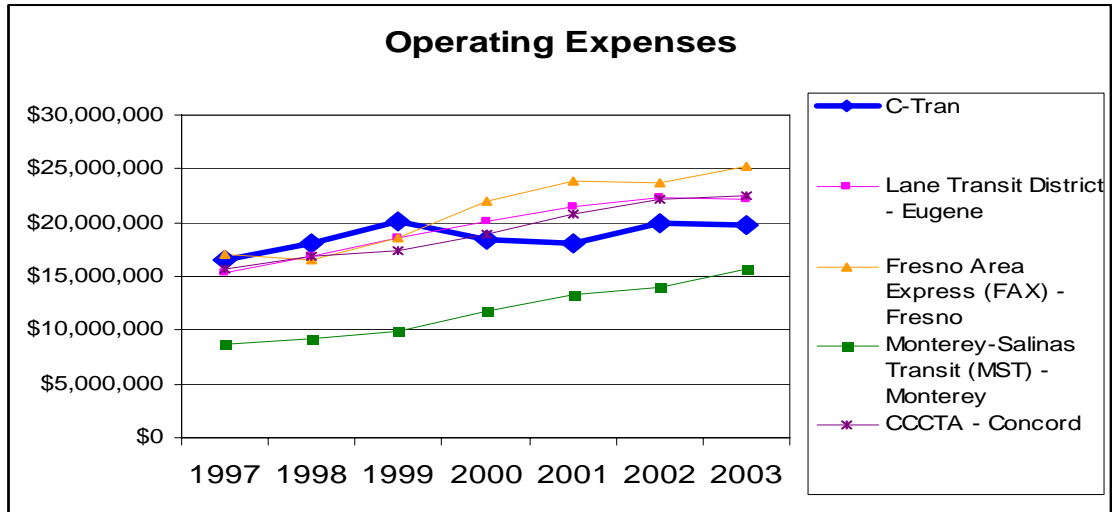
The service area population of CTRAN has remained relatively stable over the period 1997 to 2004, much like its peers, with the only exception being Fresno Area Express which had an increase in service area population in 2001.



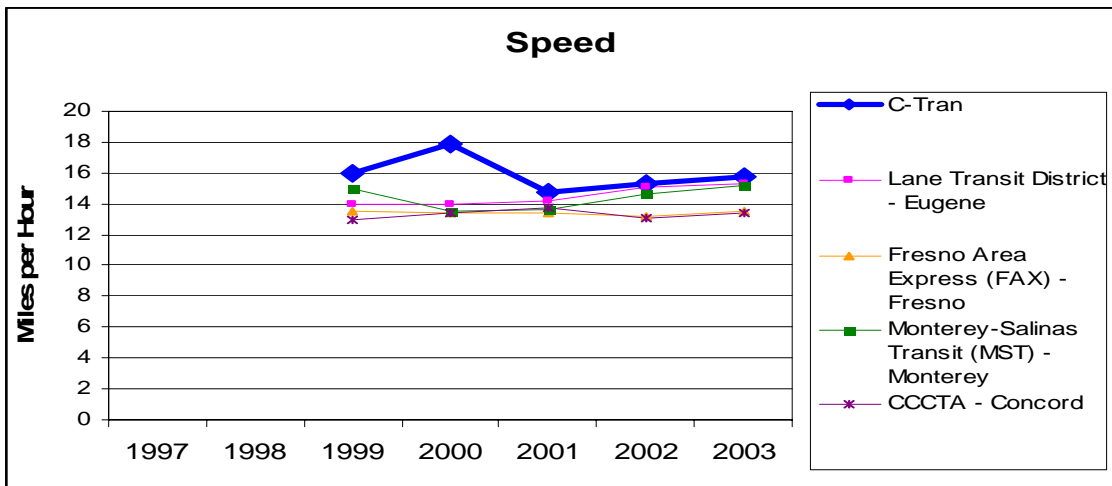
CTRAN's ridership, as measured by annual passenger miles, is currently the highest in the peer group.



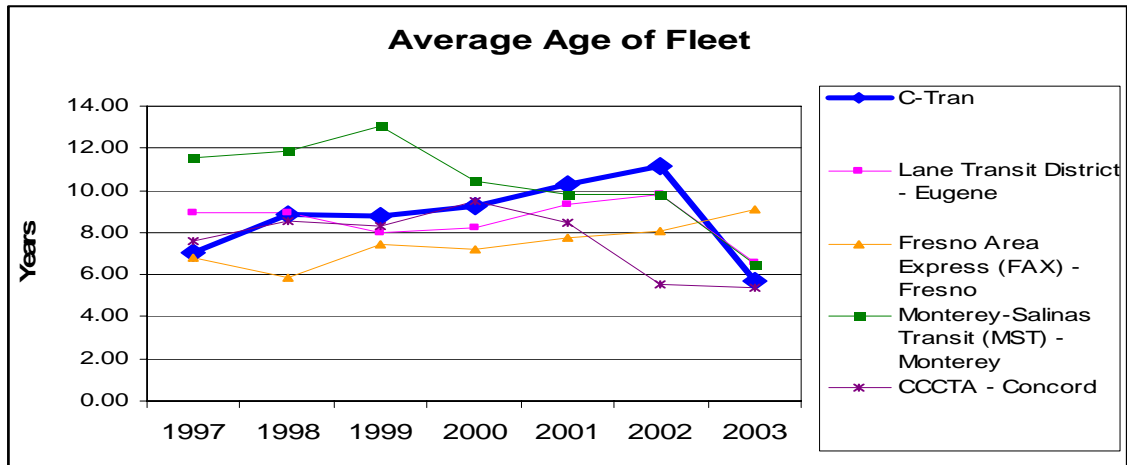
CTRAN's ridership, as measured by annual unlinked trips, is average in comparison with the peer group.



CTRAN's operating expenses are in line with its peers and have remained relatively stable since 1999.



Average speed, a proxy for traffic congestion on bus routes, does not differ greatly amongst the agencies in the peer group, although CTRAN's average speed is consistently higher than its peers.



C'TRAN's average fleet age is currently amongst the lowest in the peer group, however prior to 2003, it had one of the oldest. A major bus buy in 2003 reduced the average age from 11.18 years in 2002 to 5.70 years in 2003.

Observations and Recommendations

Service Coverage and Routes

Riding the Bus

Members of the Ridership Team took several trips on the CTRAN bus system during peak and off-peak hours to gain a first hand perspective on the operation of the system.

The team found CTRAN staff to be highly competent, well-informed, and friendly. Transit store employees were able to answer questions regarding routes and fares without hesitation and the staff was able to provide detailed information upon request, including headways and average trip times. Operators were personable and helpful to riders, and demonstrated good knowledge of the whereabouts of businesses and other services on their routes. The buses were exceptionally clean and well maintained. Buses and shelters were in excellent condition and most are well equipped with system information. Route structures were quite simple and easy to understand, and service operated frequently.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should ensure that drivers announce all stops.

The team noticed inconsistent and, at times, inaudible announcements of upcoming stops from vehicle operators. Regular and clearly audible announcements of scheduled stops are of great value, particularly for riders unfamiliar with the routes or with the Clark County area in general.

Routes and Coverage

To maintain existing customers and to attract new customers, service must be clean, easy to understand, time competitive, cost competitive, and convenient. CTRAN has done a very good job in developing and maintaining some key service elements. The team's experience with the bus, as indicated above, was very positive.

Urban Development

It is apparent from the on-street experience, and in reviewing zoning and development plans from the City of Vancouver and Clark County, that there is a clear difference in approach between urban and suburban planning that is common among other American cities. The planned intensification of downtown Vancouver has started in several areas including extensive pedestrian amenities and development of new "Transit Oriented" buildings immediately adjacent to the Seventh Street Transit Center. By contrast, the outer urban and suburban area is being developed commercially in five-acre minimum lots with big-box retail, light industrial, and other auto complimentary businesses.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should be allowed to remain at the Seventh Street Transit Center.

Downtown Vancouver is a major trip generator and should remain a key focus for both the short and long term. The Transit Center (of which an important portion is actually owned by CTRAN) should remain at Seventh Street. The Transit Center is a well laid out transfer facility and a destination for local and express customers. It is strategically located for long-term urban and suburban development, provides good transportation choices, and will enhance downtown Vancouver.

Moving this layover and transfer facility to a location east of I-5 will create customer transfers that are too close to the final destination for large numbers of choice riders to tolerate, and will unnecessarily complicate the service. It could also incur additional operational costs. For example, routes approaching from the east continue serving downtown by looping through downtown, then proceeding to the layover near I-5 at the end of the trip, and repeated for service in the reverse direction.

Maintaining good bus operations and facilities in downtown Vancouver will be critical in supporting any future high capacity transit.

Clark College

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should reconsider the location of the Clark College transit center.

Clark College is a strong source of transit customers and will likely continue to be one in the future. Continued partnership is important, and improved facilities may play a role in the future. The proposed location for a transit center at the former I-5 rest area is too far of a walk to the college, is not a pedestrian friendly environment near the freeway, and will require routes serving it to incur additional operational costs to access it.

The staff concept for Route 25 to connect the Washington State University (WSU) and Clark College campuses is a good one. It will reinforce the relationship, preclude the need for shuttle buses, and increase ridership.

Portland Park and Ride.

The Portland Park and Ride is clearly one of the strongest markets for CTRAN. Several routes effectively tap into this market. Ridership on Express Commuter routes has declined since pass prices were dramatically increased in May 2005.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTTRAN should partner with TriMet to provide a consolidated service between Routes 6 and 105 rather than duplicating this service.

This will save both transit agencies operations funds.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTTRAN should consider expanding service to Evergreen Park and Ride.

This service has a history of strong usage that could be marketed for its return to service.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTTRAN should design new park and ride lots with the capability for expansion on the same site or on property immediate adjacent thereto.

This will conserve financial and planning resources in the long term and will allow the system to meet new demand.

Vancouver Mall

RECOMMENDATION:

CTTRAN should ensure that the location of the new Vancouver Mall transit facility be as close to the mall entrance as possible.

The mall will continue to be a strong transit destination and regional trip generator. One of the best features of the existing transit facility is its close proximity to the mall entrance. The design and amenities proposed for this location are excellent.

In negotiating this site, it may be helpful to survey CTRAN customers on shopping and working at the mall. See Appendix A for a sample survey conducted by Metro Transit.

Parking Pricing

RECOMMENDATION:

CTTRAN should make pass pricing reflective of parking pricing in downtown Portland.

Key factors in providing cost competitive service are fuel prices, parking prices, and supply relative to transit fares. There is currently ample, low cost (if not free) parking in the downtown Vancouver area. This is a market that could yield stronger transit usage if parking were priced or restricted to compete with auto commuting. If new pass pricing is significantly less than parking, this should be marketed (coupled with rising fuel costs) to

a broad audience of new and potential riders.

Trip Level Data Analysis

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should routinely analyze fare box data for service and frequency decisions.

CTRAN currently does not have adequate data collection capabilities to help make decisions on trip level service adjustments. CTRAN's planned introduction of automatic passenger counters (APC) and automated vehicle locators (AVL) will be critical in addressing this deficiency. CTRAN should have a second data source to check the accuracy of APC data in testing phases, such as fare box level data and manual ride checks.

Procedures for bus driver operations of the General Farebox, Incorporated fare collection device coupled with better reporting software can provide excellent trip level ridership data to determine how well any given trip is performing compared to others, and help in deciding how to adjust the span of service and frequency.

Service and Route Changes

Based on overall route performance, demographics, and land development design by area and ride checks, CTRAN staff route structure recommendations are reasonable. While overall rides and revenue hours appear to be reasonable on a route level given CTRAN's budget, there is excess frequency and bus capacity throughout the day on various routes, particularly midday and evening. More precise schedule reductions could be made with fare box data analysis resulting in a better allocation of resources.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should retain most express commuter service regardless of the outcome of the sales tax vote on September 20, 2005.

Evergreen Park & Ride service has a history of strong usage that could be marketed for its return to service. While there is excess frequency and bus capacity on some schedules, it may be worth keeping to help market the convenience of the express service.

Suburban-rural service (Routes 7, 72, 76, 78, and the tail of Route 2) will not yield strong ridership growth near term, and could be reduced to peak only in any scenario, or eliminated to conserve financial resources.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should time transfers between buses on the schedule to improve reliability and ease in connections.

This means going to a “clocked” headway on connecting routes. In some cases, this may mean reducing the headway from 45 minutes to 60 minutes or from 25 minutes to 30 minutes. Based on observed ridership, there is adequate capacity on buses to accommodate the passenger loads.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should review route segment productivity on all local routes with odd headways.

This will help to create the most efficient cycle time for clocked headways.

Public Facilities

Existing transit centers are well located, and park and ride facilities are good.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should have correct schedule and route information at each shelter, especially the Seventh Street Transit Center and those facilities with peak time only service.

This will make finding and riding the right bus much easier for customers.

Standards and Vision

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should develop service standards based on market area categories.

These categories are most helpful as related to employment, population density, income, and other demographic data by census block group. These standards should be adopted by the CTRAN board, and incorporated into the Regional Transportation Plan. An example of transit standards can be found at www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/TPP/2004/TPPAppendixM.pdf.

Fare Structure

Introduction

Numerous opportunities exist for transit agencies to increase ridership by using a fare system that matches the needs of the local population. Of all transit riders, occasional and new riders are impacted most by fare policies because their demand for transit is relatively elastic compared to commuters. Cost of service, however, is just one aspect of a fare system that can impact occasional and new riders. Simplifying a fare system,

rather than cutting fares, can make it easier for non-commuters to ride the system and has the advantage of being primarily revenue neutral.

Political Constraints on Fare Policy

CTTRAN's fare policy is set by its Board of Directors and it is usually based on staff recommendations. In the spring of 2005, CTRAN staff made recommendations regarding fare policy, many of which were accepted. .

Recent History of Fare Changes

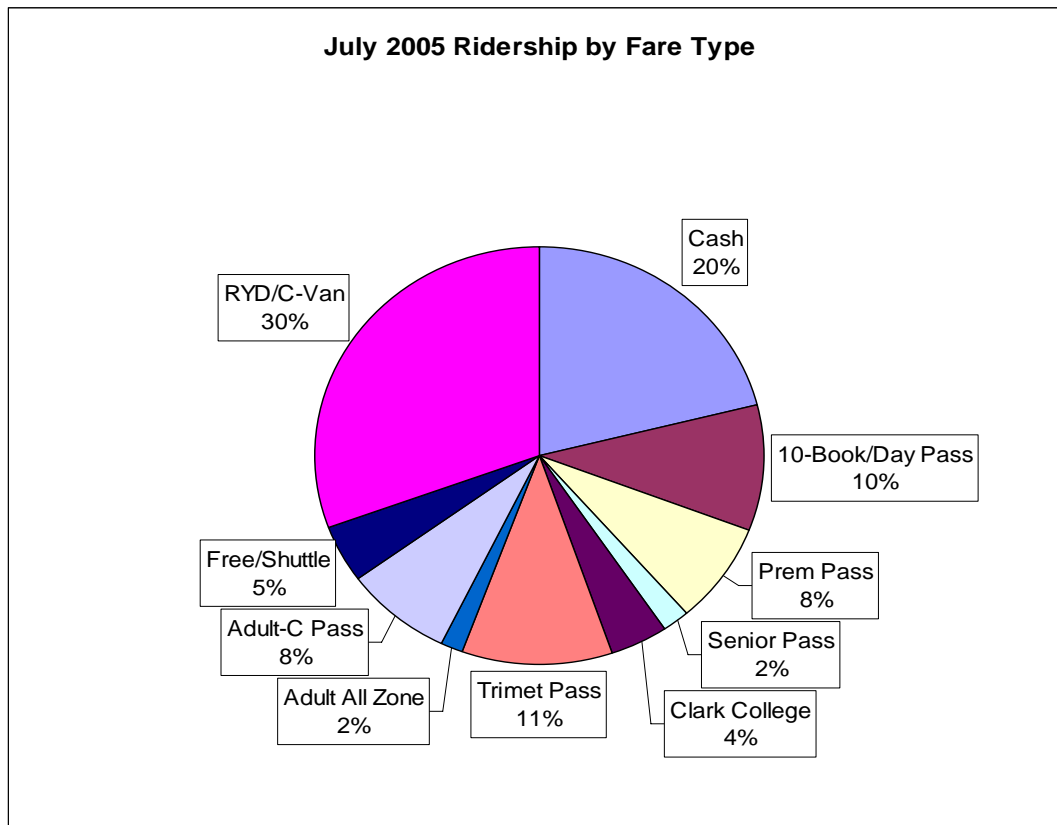
CTTRAN's Board recently enacted fare policy changes including an increase in the base fare, an elimination of transfers, institution of a day pass, and a change in discounted fares. Rather than using the industry standard of the "honored citizens" fare category which groups seniors and disabled riders together, the Board decided to charge seniors a slightly discounted rate and to provide a deep discount for youth, low-income, and disabled riders. This new fare structure requires significant new efforts by CTRAN to ensure that low-income riders qualify for the discounted fare.

Schedule and Use of Fare Options

In the past, CTRAN had a rather complicated fare system that covered three separate fare zones in Vancouver and four separate fare zones in Portland's TriMet system. Over time, that structure has been simplified to some extent, which makes the system less intimidating to new riders. There are now three full-price fares, including C-Zone, All-Zone, and Premium. Transfers have been eliminated, further simplifying the system. In place of transfers, riders can now purchase C-Zone and All-Zone day passes. Although initially opposed by many, the day passes have reduced the impact of eliminating transfers.

Even though the fare structure has been simplified, it remains too complicated, especially given the interaction between CTRAN's system and TriMet's. A new or occasional rider may be intimidated by the fare schedule and number of options, which increases the incentive for that person to seek a non-transit option, such as using an automobile.

Ridership by fare type is currently tracked for ten different fare categories as shown below for the month of July, the latest time period available since the recent fare schedule changes were implemented in May 2005.



The new day passes are not currently being measured separately, since they are part of the 10-book category. All of the other passes shown are monthly passes. There is currently no Premium day pass, which may cause difficulty for new or occasional riders that wish to use local CTRAN service to transfer to Premium routes.

The least used fare type is the All-Zone monthly pass. That pass is generally used for two groups: (1) riders taking the route to Parkrose, which is an end station on TriMet's light rail system; and (2) riders who start on CTRAN's system and then transfer to TriMet's #6 bus that connects Vancouver with downtown Portland. It appears that riders who use those two commuting options are more likely to buy a TriMet pass (which can be used on CTRAN's system), given that TriMet's comparable monthly pass is cheaper than CTRAN's All-Zone monthly pass.

Another pass type that will begin use in September 2005 is an annual Premium Pass available only through employers that participate in the program. Those employers purchase the pass on behalf of their employees and then distribute them to employees. The employers have the option of partially or entirely subsidizing their employees' fares. Approximately 250 companies have shown interest in the program thus far, and it begins in September 2005.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should introduce a Premium Day Pass and advertise it as a “Ride Anywhere” Pass.

Occasional riders who wish to use Premium Express routes to get to downtown Portland have no easy or cost-effective way to use the service if they need to make any transfers as part of their trips. These riders must pay the \$3.00 Premium fare each way, plus the cost of any transfers in the CTRAN or TriMet system. This discourages occasional riders from using the service. A Premium day pass priced at \$6.00 would add convenience for occasional riders and allow them to transfer to any other part of CTRAN’s or TriMet’s system.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should eliminate the All-Zone fare group to simplify the fare schedule.

The lowest used fare type is the All-Zone monthly pass (2%). The reason is that riders can purchase a TriMet pass that accomplishes the same purpose for less money. Because CTRAN has a revenue sharing agreement with TriMet to recover those fares, there is no reason why CTRAN should continue having an All-Zone fare category. Although eliminating the All-Zone day pass could impact some riders given that TriMet’s day pass is not readily available in Vancouver, riders could use the new Premium day pass to accomplish the same goal. Although the Premium day pass will cost much more than TriMet’s day pass, it is only \$0.50 more than CTRAN’s current All Zone day pass. In addition, riders could instead choose to use a CTRAN C-Zone day pass and add an additional amount to ride TriMet (these additional amounts are currently \$0.15 for a 2-Zone pass on TriMet or \$0.45 for an All-Zone Pass on TriMet).

In order to ensure convenience, CTRAN should consider allowing upgrades to the Premium day pass from a C-Zone day pass. This upgrade would be priced to ensure that CTRAN covers its costs (e.g., \$1 or \$1.50). CTRAN should also consider offering upgrades from its Senior and RYD fares, and implementing reduced-cost Premium fares for those two categories.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should charge a modest fare on Ozone Alert Days.

Ozone Alert programs such as CTRAN’s free-ride program are common among public transportation agencies. These programs are intended to build public awareness for air quality issues, to promote transit ridership on air quality alert days, and to lessen automobile pollution. By charging a small fare, such as \$0.50 per ride, CTRAN can still do its part to assist in the air quality effort, while reducing the negative fare revenue effect of these days. A small fare also keeps riders from using the service simply to have a place to escape the weather or to entertain themselves.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should round up fare amounts for passes between systems to simplify riding.

Currently, some TriMet passes can be used on CTRAN's system by adding \$0.85. Likewise, some CTRAN fares can be used on TriMet for an additional \$0.15 or \$0.45. CTRAN should consider ways of rounding these numbers to the nearest logical amount to make paying for fares easier (e.g., increase \$0.15 to \$0.25; \$0.45 to \$0.50; \$0.85 to \$1.00).

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should recover more of its costs for the special events shuttle.

CTRAN runs shuttle service for special events such as the Fourth of July celebration and the Clark County Fair. The fare for this service, \$1.00 round trip, is far short of the cost of providing it. Although it is valuable to provide this service for safety, parking, and traffic considerations, CTRAN should attempt to recoup its costs in some way. One option is to raise fares for those special events (to \$2.00 round trip). Another option would be to seek reimbursement from the event sponsor (from Clark County for the Fair, for example). If fares are raised, it may be possible to partner with event sponsors to give transit riders special discounts on entrance fees to the events.

If CTRAN is able to recover its costs for shuttle service, then it should consider providing shuttles for other events, including those in Portland.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should make its fare structure on the website easier for the public to locate and to understand.

CTRAN's webpage on fares is confusing for some readers. This stems from the fact that the fare structure itself is confusing, as well as the webpage layout. For example, the Premium fare is listed in the row for All-Zone (this would be corrected quite easily if the All-Zone category is eliminated). CTRAN should consider different ways of laying out the fares on the page, including the possibility of organizing it by pass type (one trip, daily, monthly, annual), or laying it out so that the fares are all together and not separated by a map and bulleted text. In addition, the section on using TriMet fares on CTRAN and vice-versa is confusing and could be rewritten. Splitting the information into two groups (TriMet fares on CTRAN and CTRAN fares on TriMet) is very useful, but there might be a better way to organize the text within each of those two sections.

Additionally, the new policy that transfers are not accepted on CTRAN needs to be made obvious, especially on the webpage. Drivers are expected to ask cash paying passengers if they would prefer a day pass, but this practice is inconsistently applied. The new policy on transfers should be advertised alongside the new day passes, as well as with the

Premium day pass if it is implemented. The fare section of the website should have this information in a more prominent place, rather than in fine print, bulleted text.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should decide which fare types will be used for tracking ridership.

CTRAN is currently limited to tracking ridership against only ten fare types. If the All-Zone Monthly Pass is discontinued, an additional farebox key will be freed up. That key could be used for day passes. Another option would be to use that key for C-Zone day passes and track Premium day passes under the key currently used for free fare riders and shuttle service. Those two types of fares could then be moved to the asterisk key, which is being used for a variety of fare types. As new fare collection technology is considered, CTRAN should improve its tracking of fare types, including the option to track more than ten types. In the short term, surveys could be used to determine ridership data by fare type for those types that are not currently available.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should conduct an analysis of the administrative costs of qualifying low-income riders for RYD fares for use in future discussions with the Board over pricing levels.

The CTRAN Board recently decided to offer deeply discounted fares to low-income riders. This new policy creates additional administrative costs for CTRAN, and those costs are not recouped due to the significant discount. CTRAN should measure the administrative costs of qualifying low-income riders so that further discussions with the board over RYD fare pricing can be based on the actual costs of implementing the program. In addition, measuring the costs of qualifying low-income riders could lead to better methods, possibly saving on administrative costs for CTRAN.

Distribution

All fare media are currently available from the transit centers and some park and ride lots. There are a few additional locations where certain types of media are available as well, but there are no partnerships with local retail businesses for selling fare media. Some passes are also available by mail or on the buses.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

CTRAN should partner with local retail businesses (banks, convenience stores, drug stores, supermarkets, check-cashing outlets, etc.) to provide additional opportunities for customers to purchase fare media.

CTRAN should consider partnerships that would give riders a new place to purchase the most commonly used fare media. Such businesses will benefit from the free advertising

that CTRAN would provide regarding the availability of fare media at these new locations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

CTRAN should sell its fare media through the internet.

This can be a cost-effective method of providing fare media to riders. This method may also be more convenient for many riders.

Fare Collection

Buses are equipped with cash fare boxes only. There is currently no use of electronic fare media. CTRAN is considering moving to Smart Trip technology in the future.

RECOMMENDATION (Long Term):

CTRAN should coordinate with TriMet for regional fare integration if Smart Trip fare collection is implemented in both systems.

The complexity of transfers between CTRAN and TriMet would be virtually eliminated for users of Smart Trip cards if both fare collection systems are integrated. This would allow better data collection and seamless transfers between the two systems. It would also remove a barrier for occasional riders which is the need to have exact change.

RECOMMENDATION (Long Term):

CTRAN should reinstate free transfers or reduced fare transfers if Smart Trip fare collection is implemented.

CTRAN eliminated transfers based on revenue concerns and problems related to abuse. If CTRAN implements Smart Trip Fare Collection, most of these concerns would be eliminated. Also, if transfers are either free or discounted with the use of a Smart Trip card, riders will have an added incentive to use Smart Trip cards over other media types.

Operations and Maintenance

CTRAN has a very well run fixed route operation. The demand for the service is robust, with ridership remaining steady throughout the workday. The fixed route headways are very good on most routes, ranging from peak headways of 10 minutes on some Express Routes, to one hour on some lower ridership routes. Most travel times are reasonable. All fixed route vehicles have security cameras, bicycle racks, and are lift equipped. Customer amenities, such as passenger shelters, are plentiful and well maintained. All passenger shelters are accessible for passengers with disabilities. The downtown Seventh Street transfer station works well and is well maintained. The Park and Ride lots are well

maintained and well used. Express service to Portland is an important aspect of CTRAN's overall service.

Vancouver has a reasonably high rate of transit service per capita (.80 annual trips per resident) compared to some other similarly sized areas.

Operations

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should institute incentives to reduce absenteeism and worker's compensation costs.

In 2004, CTRAN experienced over 30 lost-time on-the-job accidents. Nearly all of these accidents were in the operator group. Worker's compensation incentives, such as group cash incentives, have been very successful at other similarly sized properties and should be explored in Vancouver. In addition, white boards listing the number of "Days Without a Lost-Time Injury" should be posted in the facilities maintenance and fleet maintenance areas. An incentive, such as a departmental barbeque might also be offered upon attainment of safety targets.

Absenteeism was also higher than it should be. CTRAN should solicit ideas from various employee groups regarding possible incentive programs that can reduce excessive absenteeism. Although this recommendation may not directly improve ridership, it can conserve limited financial resources that could be applied to initiatives to enhance ridership.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should consider having a third party handle its ADA Lift Program eligibility process.

ADA paratransit service is one of the most expensive services to offer, with one-way trips in the \$20.00 range. CTRAN currently handles its own eligibility process. It may be more cost effective to have a third party who specializes in paratransit issues handle the eligibility process. The goal is to reduce the eligible rate for people who can otherwise use the regular fixed route service. This will not only reduce costs but provide the service that is appropriate to each customer's unique situation.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should hire a consultant to provide customer service training to operators and call center employees.

CTRAN does an overall good job of customer service. Some operators do an excellent job, while others seem indifferent to customers. Periodic customer service training can

provide an opportunity for management to show operators and call center employees that they are appreciated and that management realizes the importance of their positions within the organization. Any customer service training should be followed up with subsequent sessions to assess the progress being made.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should pursue Federal transit enhancement funds to purchase passenger benches.

Although there is a good number of passenger shelters distributed throughout the system, CTRAN has very few passenger benches. Adding passenger benches along the routes will add to the comfort of CTRAN's passengers, make riding the bus more attractive and will provide a valuable source of advertising revenue.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should add lighted advertising panels to existing passenger shelters.

These panels will light the shelters at night and will add additional advertising space. The cost of retrofitting the existing shelters with advertising panels might prove to be too costly to justify, but should be analyzed.

Maintenance

CTRAN's maintenance department is doing an excellent job of maintaining the agency's equipment. Fixed route buses are extremely clean and well kept. The bus lot is well marked and the facilities are in very good shape, despite the maintenance building being too small for an operation the size of CTRAN. Maintenance has done a good job of making the most of the space they have. The vehicle spare ratio is approximately 40% because CTRAN is holding onto more than twenty buses until the September 20, 2005 sales tax election. If the measure fails, CTRAN will retire these vehicles.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should implement a program to reduce tire damage by operators.

Many of CTRAN's fixed route vehicles have visible tire damage due to operators curbing tires while on route. This problem can be reduced dramatically by increased attention during daily inspections by supervisory staff. The Fleet Maintenance division could mark tires to help determine when tire damage occurs. Although this recommendation may not directly improve ridership, it can conserve limited financial resources that could be used for initiatives to enhance ridership.

Marketing

CTRAN has a history of well-financed and well-executed marketing plans. Over the past few years, the budget for marketing has been drastically reduced and the new focus has been on providing information to voters on ballot issues. General ridership advertising has been limited by these factors. CTRAN has maintained a high level of effective public involvement activities and has a strong media relations component. The staff is dedicated, professional, and has been able to do much with limited resources.

Outreach

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should partner with organizations that provide English as a Second Language (ESL) and literacy training by making transit riding a part of the life skills curriculum.

The service area is experiencing an influx of people of Hispanic, Russian, Romanian, Asian, and other nationalities. These new residents have a limited proficiency in English. Currently, CTRAN translates some materials into Spanish, Russian, and Vietnamese. Materials are distributed through schools, places of worship, and social service organizations. This represents an opportunity to gain more riders from the new immigrant groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a. CTRAN should work with area colleges and universities to design and implement a travel training program for seniors as part of a class project.***
- b. CTRAN should work with social service organizations to “train the trainer” as a way to expand staff capabilities to teach seniors how to ride public transit.***

The senior citizen population is growing and many do not have access to transportation. Many of the people of the age group (post 1946 “boomer” generation) have not had experience riding public transportation and are therefore intimidated by it.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should offer a senior free-ride program.

Although fare revenue is a critical aspect of CTRAN’s operating budget, a fixed route free-ride program for seniors over a certain age, (e.g. 75), should be considered as part of the overall fare structure. The most recent passenger survey could be used to determine a threshold age level that would not have a material negative revenue effect. These passengers are already paying a greatly reduced fare. This senior free ride program could be advertised in CTRAN’s literature and on its website. This program would be well received by the senior citizen community.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should move telephone information and customer service from the Operations Department to the Public Affairs Department.

The telephone and customer service personnel are currently under the Operations Department and do not report to the Public Affairs Department. The telephone information and customer service group are the frontline contact with customers and can be used as a valuable component of the marketing program. A valuable feedback mechanism of customer comments going directly to the Director of Public Affairs can result if this change is made.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should add trip planning capabilities to the web site including coordination with TriMet. CTRAN should also make the new “no-transfer” policy more prominent on the site.

CTRAN will expand and update their website under its current IT plan. Adding features will enhance its usefulness to customers.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should evaluate the effectiveness of the \$12,000 direct mail campaign aimed at new residents.

Because of budget constraints and the high price of media in the Portland-Vancouver market, little paid advertising has been used in recent years. There may be a more effective way to attract new riders than a direct mail campaign.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should work with TriMet on a joint ridership marketing campaign that is general in nature and that would increase ridership for both CTRAN and TriMet.

APTA’s PT² campaign could be used for creative ideas. This campaign provides a tool kit of print advertisements and television commercials which could be adapted for local use. A joint effort will benefit both systems by conserving financial resources.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should expand its specialty publications for non-English speakers, seniors, minorities, and others.

This could be expanded by providing articles and photographs that the publications will run verbatim at no cost. Human interest stories and employee profiles of people in these

special interest groups are generally well-accepted by them. There is \$6,000 in the budget for this program.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should design future brochures, maps, signs, reports, business stationary, etc. so they appear to be part of the same family of services.

CTRAN's twenty-fifth anniversary is on January 1, 2006. This provides an opportunity to reinforce and expand the CTRAN brand. CTRAN has many good collateral pieces, but there is not much continuity between them.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should differentiate products while keeping the overall brand intact.

The new bus graphics are fresh and appealing. The Connector service could be customized to the neighborhoods it serves. The Premium Commuter service to Portland could have a special identity to differentiate it from local metro Vancouver service. This would be appropriate since it has a higher fare and may help dispel some of the opposition to running service outside of Vancouver. The new service plan presents an opportunity to implement these changes.

Public Relations

CTRAN operates in a complex political environment with members of various local political entities comprising its Board of Directors. The composition of the board can present challenges for unity and consistency regarding policies and projects. This was recently exhibited when the Vancouver City Council passed a 0.2% sales tax increase for transportation one month prior to CTRAN's planned sales tax election.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should take steps to enhance its relationships with local elected officials and their staff.

Management should contact the Mayors, all City Council members, all Clark County commissioners, Clark County's U.S. Congressional representative, and their staff to invite them to accompany CTRAN on an educational bus ride. By seeing CTRAN's impressive public transportation system for themselves, these local and national decision makers will gain a much better appreciation for the importance of supporting CTRAN's mission.

Additionally, CTRAN should consider conferring with a local public relations firm to develop better relationships with local governmental units, and local business leaders. In

connection with this, CTRAN should remain active in the Vancouver Chamber of Commerce.

The support of these public officials is essential to the success of CTRAN. CTRAN can help these officials understand how transit works, what land use and development patterns facilitate transit use, how rail and bus are mutually supportive, and how to build a common vision for the region. The CTRAN board's understanding of the 20-year plan and the refinement of the transit standards and guidelines can help Vancouver's development into a transit friendly future.

Partnerships

Opportunities for increasing ridership exist in the use of various types of partnerships. They may include university or school provided passes, employer provided passes or vouchers, vanpooling and carpooling programs, public transportation coordination with social service agencies, and transit orientated development in the vicinity of transit stations, hubs, or transfer stations. Suggestions are provided below for increasing ridership as well as cost-cutting measures for effective delivery of services.

University Passes

There is potential for increasing ridership to institutions of higher education within CTRAN's service area, primarily Clark College and Washington State University (WSU). Prospectively, other opportunities may exist with students who travel either to or from Vancouver and Portland under mutual agreements with universities that waive out-of-state tuition.

Clark College

CTRAN has a C-Pass program with Clark College, which is located just east of downtown Vancouver and the I-5 freeway. The C-Pass program allows a passholder (students and faculty) unlimited rides at any time during the semester. The cost of the pass is discounted and revenue is passed onto CTRAN based on a negotiated formula at the end of each year. The pass benefits students by reducing transit costs, benefits the college by reducing demand for limited parking spaces, and improves CTRAN ridership during both peak and non-peak hours. CTRAN tracks the trip numbers and is reimbursed at \$0.50 per trip. Recent enrollment figures at Clark College are 13,454 students (non-FTE), 158 full-time faculty, and 319 part-time faculty. Approximately 200,000 trips using transit were counted last year.

Due to space constraints at the main campus, Clark College expanded its campus at two satellite locations. One is located east near Fisher's Landing and the other is located north, at the Vancouver campus of WSU. Clark College students that are enrolled in computer science, biology and engineering programs currently attend classes at WSU. However, a dedicated building at WSU for Clark College students is scheduled to be

completed by September 2005, to meet future growth projections. Opportunities may exist for increased transit ridership between the three Clark campuses.

Washington State University

WSU opened a Vancouver campus a few years ago, originally for junior and senior level students. Effective with the 2005 Spring semester, WSU Vancouver had 1,895 total students or 1,337 FTEs. The Washington State legislature recently approved funds for expanding the campus, adding up to 200 freshman students with the semester commencing August, 2006.

CTTRAN does not provide transit service to the WSU campus. Limited service was provided by WSU through July 2005, using a 12-person shuttle van for transporting students between the WSU campus and CTRAN's Salmon Creek Park and Ride. However, WSU will not restart this service in the future unless funding becomes available. If the tax measure on the September 20, 2005, ballot is approved, CTRAN plans on extending services to the WSU campus as well as to the nearby Legacy Hospital (500 employees) and other nearby medical facilities. Legacy Hospital opened on August 22, 2005.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTTRAN should pursue U-Pass type agreements at WSU if the September 20, 2005 ballot measure passes, and should explore additional opportunities with Clark College to expand student ridership at all three campuses.

In reference to Clark College, CTRAN should review UCLA Professor Don Shoup's studies regarding the effectiveness of transit on parking and traffic for potential transit-related development at Clark College. His latest study can be found at www.its.ucla.edu/research/ua/ua/pdf.

Employer Passes and Vouchers

CTTRAN uses a Transit Check Program that provides coupons to employees of participating employers for acquisition of monthly transit tickets and passes. The level of subsidy provided by employers varies, ranging from 25 to 75%. Some of the participating companies include Hewlett-Packard (1,800 employees) and SW Washington Medical Center (3,500 employees). The program involves monthly processing. It is time-consuming and costly since it involves 12 transactions per employee per year as opposed to one transaction for annualized transactions. While a conversion to an annualized program would render almost immediate benefits, conversion to a web-based program would further enhance efficiencies and cost reductions.

Numerous studies have found that employer-subsidized passes have a significant impact on encouraging both new bus riders and maintaining existing riders in the system. This is a proven method of increasing transit ridership, while programs that provide less benefit

(such as employee-funded passes on a pre-tax basis) attract virtually no new riders to the system.

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should implement either an annualized employer pass program or a web-based program for purchase of transit passes or both.

Every effort should be made to market passes at or near “no cost” to employees to encourage increased transit ridership. CTRAN should also pursue aggressive marketing of an employer pass program to other large employers within CTRAN’s service area. See Appendix B for a list of Clark County’s largest employers.

Vanpooling and Carpooling

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should conduct a study of vanpools within the CTRAN service area, and determine the most cost effective method for deployment.

In the past, CTRAN implemented a van pool program that was costly to operate. It was discontinued. However, vanpooling can be an effective component of a transit system and with the growth and changing conditions within CTRAN’s service area, it should be re-assessed for potential deployment.

Social Service Coordination

RECOMMENDATION:

CTRAN should hire a consultant to conduct a study of social service and public transportation systems within the CTRAN service area and recommend standards for better coordination, resource allocation, uniform certifications, and efficient and cost-effective transportation.

Coordination of dedicated social services transportation and public transportation can result in significant cost savings, improved service to customers, and an increased use of public transportation. However, in CTRAN’s service area, there are several entities involved in providing social services transportation within the CTRAN service area, each with different target populations, resource limitations and objectives. In addition, coordination is lacking, especially with certification standards amongst the service providers for disabled persons that cause inequitable burdens upon certain service providers. There is a need for a review of the underlying system to ensure greater efficiency of social service and public transportation.

Appendices

- A. Metro Transit Ridership Survey – Rosedale Transit Center
- B. List of Clark County’s Largest Employers

Appendix A

Rosedale Transit Center Ridership Survey

Thank you for helping with our brief survey. Please answer these questions and return the survey to the person who gave it to you. All responses are confidential and the information will be used to improve our services.

1. What is the main purpose of your trip today?
 - ☐ Work
 - ☐ Shopping
 - ☐ Personal Business
 - ☐ Recreation
 - ☐ Social
 - ☐ Other
2. Are you employed by any of the retailers at Rosedale?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
3. Did your bus trip include shopping at Rosedale?
 - ☐ Yes (*answer 3A and 3B*)
 - ☐ No (*skip to 4*)

3A Did you make any purchases at Rosedale today?

 - ☐ Yes (*answer 3B*)
 - ☐ No (*skip to 4*)

3B Approximately how much did you spend at Rosedale today?

\$ _____
4. **If bus transportation were not available, how would you have made this trip?**
 - ☐ Drive
 - ☐ Someone would drive me
 - ☐ Taxi
 - ☐ Walk
 - ☐ Bike
 - ☐ Could not have made the trip
5. Which bus route will you boarding at Rosedale today? _____
6. **What is your zip code?** _____
7. How frequently do you ride the bus?
 - ☐ Daily
 - ☐ A few times a week
 - ☐ Once a week
 - ☐ Rarely
8. What is your gender?
 - ☐ Male

☐ Female

9. What is your age? _____

10. What is your annual estimated household income?

- ☐ Less than \$10,000
- ☐ \$10,000 to \$19,999
- ☐ \$20,000 to \$29,999
- ☐ \$30,000 to \$39,999
- ☐ \$40,000 to \$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000 to \$59,999
- ☐ \$60,000 to \$69,999
- ☐ \$70,000 and higher

Appendix B

List of Clark County's Largest Employers

List of Clark County's Largest Employers					
Rank	Company/Address	Phone Email/Web	Employees Total	Type of Business	CEO
1	Southwest Washington Medical Center P.O. Box 1600 Vancouver, WA 98668	256.2000 marketing@swmedicalcenter.com	3,500	Health Care	Joseph M. Korum
2	Evergreen School District No. 114 13501 N.E. 28 th St. Vancouver, WA 98668	604.4000 ND	2,883	Education	Richard Melching superintendent
3	Vancouver School District No. 37 2901 Falk Road Vancouver, WA 98661	313.1000 vansd.org	2,775	Education	Dr. John W. Erickson
4	Clark County P.O. Box 5000 Vancouver, WA 98666	397.2456 hrradmin@clark.wa.gov	1,670	Government	Bill Barron
5	Fred Meyer Stores P.O. Box 523 Portland, OR 97242	503.232.8844 www.fredmeyer.com	1,400	Retail	Darrell Webb
6	Battle Ground School District No. 119 11104 N.E. 149 th St. Brush Prairie, WA 98606	885.5300 info@bgsd.k12.wa.us	1,321	Education	Shonny Bria, Ph.D.
7	Bonneville Power Administration P.O. Box 491 Vancouver, WA 98666	503.230.5000 www.bpa.gov	1,278	Utilities	Mark W. Maher
8	Safeway Stores P.O. Box 523 Clackamas, OR 97015	503.656.1461 www.safeway.com	1,202	Retail	Lyle Watterman
9	Georgia-Pacific Corp. 401 N.E. Adams St. Camas, WA 98607	834.3021 www.gp.com	1,160	Manufacturing	Mike Tompkins
10	The Nautilus Group Inc. 1400 N.E. 136 th Ave. Vancouver, WA 98684	694.7722 rarp@nautilus.com	1,125	Manufacturer of healthy and fitness products	Gregg Hammann
11	Clark College 1800 E. McLoughlin Blvd. Vancouver, WA 98663	992.2000 www.clark.edu	1,102	Education	Dr. Wayne Branch
12	City of Vancouver 210 E. 13 th St. Vancouver, WA 98660	696.8121 mayor@ci.vancouver.wa.us	1,045	City Government	Pat McDonnell
13	Wafertech 5509 N.W. Parker St. Camas, WA 98607	817.3000 www.wafertech.com	1,030	Manufacturing	Steve Tso
14	Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway 1313 W. 11 th St. Vancouver, WA 98660	418.6371 ND	980	Transportation	Read Fay
15	Kaiser Permanente 14406 N.E. 20 th Ave. Vancouver, WA 98686	418.6001 www.kaiserpermanente.org	796	Health Care	Collette Yamaguchi
16	SEH America Inc. P.O. Box 8965 Vancouver, WA 98668	883.7000 www.sehamerica.com	832	Manufacturing	Isao Iwashita
17	The Vancouver Clinic 700 N.E. 87 th Ave.	254.1240 www.thevancouverclinic.co	715	Health Care	Thomas C. VanSweringen

	Vancouver, WA 98664	m			
18	Educational Service District No. 112 2500 N.E. 65 th Ave. Vancouver, WA 98661	750.7500 www.esd112.org	700	Education Agency	Dr. Twyla Barnes
19	Holland-Burgerville 109 W. 17 th St. Vancouver, WA 98660	694.1521 www.thehollandinc.com	588	Restaurant	Tom Mears
20	Camas School District No. 117 1919 N.E. Ione St. Camas, WA 98607	817.4400 www.camas.wednet.edu	585	Education	Albert Davidian
21	Fritio-Lay Inc. 4808 N.W. Fruit valley Road Vancouver, WA 98660	737.3000 www.fritolay.com	560	Manufacturer	ND
22	Matsushita Kotobuki Electronics of America 2001 Kotobuki Way Vancouver, WA 98660	695.1338 ND	550	Manufacturing and assembly	Satoshi Yamagami
23	Washington State University 14204 N.E. Salmon Creek Ave. Vancouver, WA 98686	546.9788 campusad@vancouver.wsu.edu	514	Public University	H.A. Dengerink
24	Columbia Machine Inc. 107 Grand Blvd. Vancouver, WA 98661	694.1501 www.columbiamachine.com	508	Manufacturing	Jerry R. Findley
25	Electric Lightware, Inc. 4400 N.E. 77 th Ave. Vancouver, WA 98662	816.3000 mktg@eli.net	499	Telecomm	Daniel McCarthy
26	Personnel Source 11818 S.E. Mill Plain Blvd., Suite 202 Vancouver, WA 98684	891.9961 www.personnelsource.com	450	Staffing agency	Annalise Burrington
27	U.S. Postal Service (Clark County) 2700 Caples Ave. Vancouver, WA 98661	992.5000 ND	368	Government, U.S.P.S	David Scheels
28	C-Tran P.O. Box 2529 Vancouver, WA 98668	696.4494 c-tran@c-tran.com	368	Public Transit	Lynne Griffith
29	The Columbian P.O. Box 180 Vancouver, WA 98666	694.3391 www.columbian.com	366	Publishing	Scott Campbell
30	Washougal School District No. 112 4855 Evergreen Way Washougal, WA 98671	954.3000 www.washougal.k12.wa.us	350	Education	Robert Donaldson
31	Charter Communications 521 N.E. 136 th Ave. Vancouver, WA 98684	828.6700 www.charter.com	315	Telecomm	Colleen Harris
32	Clark Public Utilities P.O. Box 8900 Vancouver, WA 98668	992.3000 mailbox@clarkpud.org	312	Utilities	Wayne Nelson
33	Hire Source Inc. 16209 S.E. McGillivray Blvd., Suite L Vancouver, WA 98683	885.9391 hirsourcestaffing@comcast.net	300	Staffing services	Laura Hayes
34	First Independent Bank 1220 Main St. Vancouver, WA 98660	699.4242 ND	285	Financial	William J. Firstenburg
35	Educational Opportunities for Children and Families 10621 N.E. Coxley Drive, Suite 207 Vancouver, WA 98662	896.9912 www.eocwa.org	259	Non-profit	Bob Williamson
36	Christensen Shipyards, LTD 4400 S.E. Columbia Way Vancouver, WA 98661	695.3328 inquiry@christensenyachts.com	259	Builder of custom motor yachts	Dave Christensen
37	C-Tech Industries	833.1600	250	Manufacturing	Andrew Gale

	4275 N.W. Pacific Rim Blvd. Camas, WA 98607	www.c-techindustries.com			
38	Columbia River Mental Health 6926 N.E. Fourth Plain Blvd. Vancouver, WA 98661	933.3000 crmhs@crmhs.org	245	Private Non-Profit community Mental Health	ND
39	Linear Technology Corporation 4200 N.W. Pacific Rim Blvd. Camas, WA 98607	834.1900 www.linear.com	240	Semiconductors	Victor Liang
40	Columbia Credit Union P.O. Box 324 Vancouver, WA 98666	891.4000 ND	238	Banking	Dave Doss
41	New Phoenix & Last Frontier Casinos P.O. Box 1990 La Center, WA 98629	263.1290 cswenson@thephoenixcasino.com	236	Gaming and entertainment	Jo England
42	Volt Temporary Services 1499 S.E. Tech Center Dr., Suite 130 Vancouver, WA 98683	253.4344 www.volt.com	235	Services	Terri White
43	Pendleton Woolen Mills #2 17 th St. Washougal, WA 98671	835.2131 ND	230	Textiles	Charles Bishop
44	ABM Janitorial Services 7000 N.E. 117 th Ave. Vancouver, WA 98662	254.6404 dfewkes@abm.com	227	Services	Dean Fewkes
45	Hi-School Pharmacy 915 W. 11 th St. Vancouver, WA 98660	693.5879 www.hi-schoolpharmacy.com	220	Retail	Steven Oliva
46	Fort Vancouver Regional Library District 1007 E. Mill Plain Blvd. Vancouver, WA 98663	695.1561 contact@fvrl.org	220	Library	Bruce Ziegman
47	CDM In-Home Care Services 11818 S.E. Mill Plain Blvd, Suite 415 Vancouver, WA 98683	896.9695 info@cdmservices.net	205	Non-profit	Eric Erickson
48	Sharp Microelectronics of the Americas 5700 N.W. Pacific Rim Blvd. Camas, WA 98607	834.8700 www.sharpsma.com	180	Electronics	John Marck
49	Anderson Dairy Inc. 305 E. Main St. Battle Ground, WA 98604	687.7171 ND	166	Diary farm, manufacturing	Jack Dunn
50	Riverview Community Bank 900 Washington St., Suite 900 Vancouver, WA 98660	693.6650 hradmin@riverviewbank.com	186	Financial Institution	Pat Sheaffer